



<https://www.stevhuffphoto.com/2023/06/27/the-weiss-dac-204-is-here-why-this-is-the-best-dac-buy-of-2023/>

The Weiss DAC 204 is Here. Why this is the best DAC buy of 2023.

June 27, 2023



The Weiss DAC 204 is Here. Why this is the best DAC buy of 2023.

By Steve Huff

I feel like I have heard so many DACs over the last 2-3 years and yet I also feel blessed as I have truly been able to hear and audition *some of the greats*. The Chord DAVE, Weiss 501, Nagra Classic, T+A DAC 200, DCS Lina & Clock, Holo May's Flagship, Denafrips T+12th and many others were in my system here for a while and I was able to really hear what a truly high end DAC sounds like, what it does to my system.

I can say with 100% confidence that not all DACs sound the same within a revealing high end system.

Also, even if you have a high end system, if that system is not set up properly with speakers placed OUT into the room (so they can breathe) just right and using an amp that has synergy with your speakers then nothing will fix or change the sound much. When putting together a high end system we must look at each aspect, each piece and of course the room. *The room is the most important part of the high end system puzzle and this is what will effect the sound the most.*

My video on the Weiss 204



I can say with 100% confidence that not all DACs sound the same within a revealing high end system.

Also, even if you have a high end system, if that system is not set up properly with speakers placed OUT into the room (so they can breathe) just right and using an amp that has synergy with your speakers then nothing will fix or change the sound much. When putting together a high end system we must look at each aspect, each piece and of course the room. *The room is the most important part of the high end system puzzle and this is what will effect the sound the most.*

In my room I have my speakers 2-3 feet from the front wall and 1-2 feet from the side walls. They are placed into the room and this allows them to be free of the walls and reflections. You get less bass this way but you get true, tight and tuneful bass. Pushing speakers against a wall will color and bloat them and in some cases this causes bass bloom and too much of it can rob your ears of the details within the music. So once you have the speakers set up, a proper amp and cables then you will want focus on the source.



For digital you will need a streamer and DAC. There are many all in ones that feature a streamer with a DAC but most of these usually (not in all cases) have subpar DACs inside of them. Sure

they will sound fantastic, but you may not be hearing THE MAGIC that can come when everything just clicks.

I much prefer to use a streamer into an external DAC. It's why I use a Lumin U2 which is just a streamer. I can then add ANY DAC I like, whatever works best with my system and my ears.

Also, if your system is comprised of \$200 speakers and a \$500 amp, then a DAC like the Weiss will not do much of anything for you. A Bluesound Node is what I recommend for systems under \$15k (total).

This Weiss 204 is a DAC that will be right at home in systems costing \$15k-\$100k.

Back to the DAC

Some DACs are average, some sound digital, some sound flat, some sound just right. There are a couple of DACs out there today in the world that perform magic within some systems. Most cost \$10-\$25k but the good news is that the DAC I am reviewing today sounds like a true bonafide high end DAC, is made in Switzerland by a guy who truly knows all about digital to analog conversion, and comes in at \$2800. Not \$28,000 but \$2,800.00.

Under \$3k for a **true high end DAC** and one that in my system really brings the sound of a refined, magical \$10k DAC. In fact, when I reviewed the much more expensive Weiss 501 a while back I bought the review unit as I couldn't get enough of the sound. That is a \$10k+ DAC today and while it offers up all one needs for a quality D/A converter (and then some) this new little 204 from Weiss sounds just about the same, for thousands less. It doesn't have all of the rich features of the 501/502 so it is a stripped down model. This is fantastic for those who do not need the extra DSP features, head amp and larger casing.



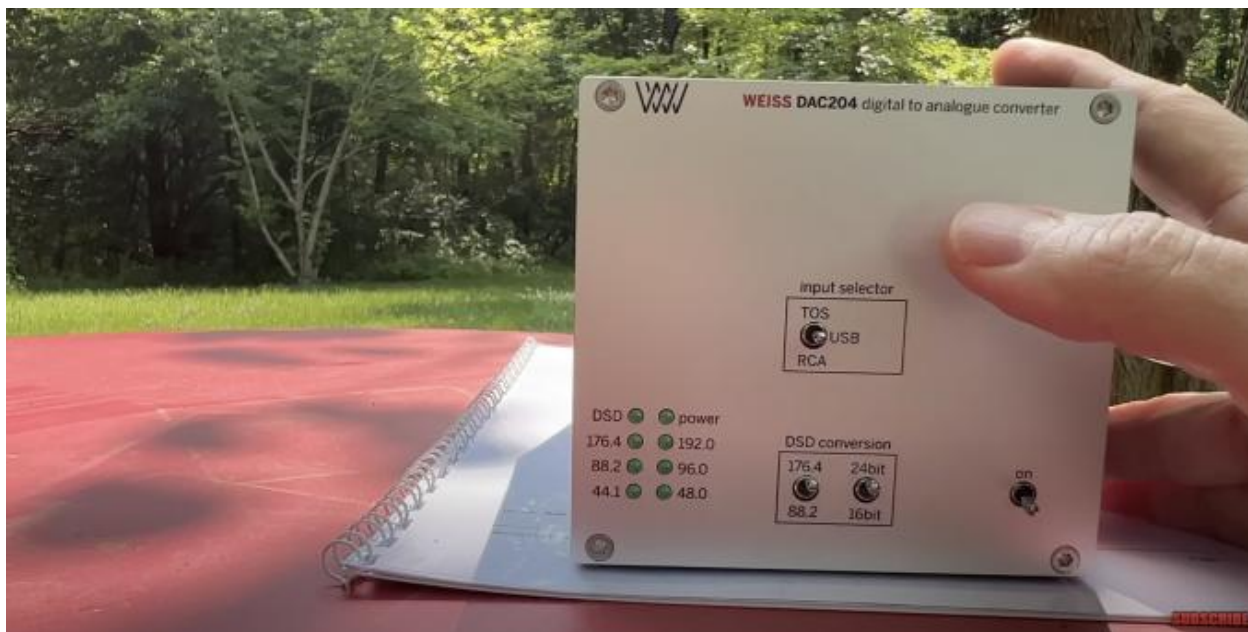
THE Weiss DAC 204

My system today is comprised of Focal Diablo Utopia Color Evo Speakers, Alexandria Audio Monitors, Aavik U-150 Integrated Amp (best amp I have heard in my life, regardless of cost), Lumin U2 Streamer, Pure Fidelity Harmony Turntable, Dual REL S/510 Subs and a few DACs (for comparisons).

When the Weiss DAC 204 arrived I was sort of smitten by the unique design. It's a cube and if it were up to me, I would have just called it the Weiss CUBE. Maybe the "Magic Cube". The device

is simple with just a few physical old school switches on the front to select the input and the sample rate.

On the back we have the USB, Coax and Optical input along with the outputs in RCA and XLR. There is also two switches to dial in the gain which can be raised or lowered depending on your system. THIS IS SO WELCOME as there are no menus to dig through, no bright screen to bother you during those late night listening sessions and everything is just as simple as it gets.



This is a DAC. It's not one of those DACs that want to be everything in one box. The Weiss 204 does not have a preamp, nor does it have DSP or filters. It's just a DAC and a damn great one at that. Because the DSP, screen and headphone amp have been removed Weiss is able to bring "this sound" to a much more affordable box.

If you read my Weiss 501 review I raved about its studio tape like quality. The way it presented music in such a refined rich way it almost made it feel as if the music was slowed down a hair. That 501 was dead silent in operation as well as being one of the most magical dacs I have heard when it comes to soundstage, imaging and presenting it all in a large 3D soundscape.

The Weiss 204 is at least 95% of the 501.

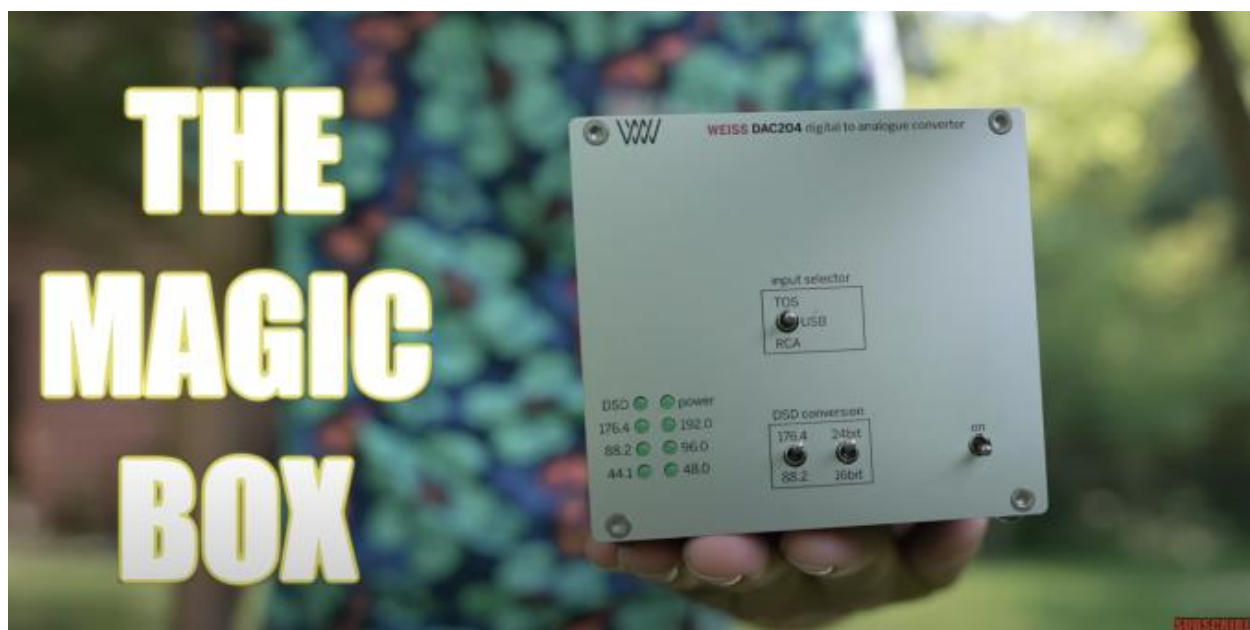
It has the same studio tape kind of sound. The same studio tape presentation and the same 3D holographic soundstage qualities. As long as your system is up to the task the Weiss 204 can truly show you what your system is made of.

THE SOUND

With the Weiss 204 in replacing the T+A DAC 200 I hear a more dynamic and exciting presentation. With this I hear body and amazing details coming from all over the room as my speakers disappear with ease. Vocals are rich and have texture. They are slightly forward in the mix with the instruments behind the voice, separated exquisitely into a huge wall of sound that is quite spectacular.

The T+A DAC 200 is no slouch and one of the best DACs I have heard in recent years but it has a sound that is more organic, flowy and airy. The Weiss is all about nailing the sound you get from

the studio. This doesn't mean it is sterile, not at all. Rather it is powerful and has fantastic energy that makes the music just sound alive. Take your pick, Some will much prefer the sound of the T+A and some the Weiss as there is no wrong choice.



I can almost see the performers in my room with the Alexandria Audio Monitors. Listening to just a normal “non” audiophile track like Queens “Ride the Wild Wind” brought forth depth, muscle, intricate separation of everything in the mix all while keeping it sounding just as the artist intended.

This DAC has a clarity and crispness that I have never heard in this price range. I mean, I haven't heard anything of this quality for under \$7k. If you do not need all of the extras of the Weiss 501/502 then the 204 is the DAC you should be looking at. It gives up nothing in sound or feel to the bigger brothers.

The 501 and 502 have recently been upgraded with new DAC chips that are said to sound even better and I have not heard those, so maybe the 204 is like a stripped down 501/502, the original version. Any way you slice it, the \$2800 price point is quite the deal in the DAC world as nothing I have heard sounds like a Weiss DAC.

Drums have snap and force. Cymbals are crisp and 3 dimensional, sounding as if they are being hit in the air between the speakers. Vocals come out in front with a clarity and richness that I have heard only in high end DAC designs.

It's a sound you may love or hate but one thing is for sure, the Weiss 204 does deliver everything in the recording and it does so in an almost perfect way. If perfection was real (it's not) the Weiss DAC's may be put in that category as they do everything as they should and nothing they shouldn't do. The 204 is a bonafide winner, a bargain in the world of high end DACs.

I ended up acquiring it for myself to replace more expensive DACs that I have here, top put some money in my pocket since I do not make money doing these reviews (which will have to change soon or I will have to stop doing them due to time involved). But I could not send this DAC back and it has been going full time in my system since it arrived. I feel it is the perfect DAC for ME and gives me all I need for my digital playback.



[If you enjoy my reviews and would like to support them I have that option on my YouTube Channel HERE.](#)

If I can achieve 100 members by October 2023 I will continue on with the audio reviews, if not I will do occasional reviews only when I buy something for myself. Doing these reviews are always fun but I can't spend 50 hours a week doing them to make \$9k a year with YouTube ad revenue.

As for the 204 it is IMO the best high end DAC bargain of 2023. It does everything I NEED IT TO DO for ME. I do not need a preamp, filters, DSP, a head amp or fancy casing, I just need a DAC that sounds as good as my system can handle, and the Weiss 204 is right at home and sounding glorious.